

The Javelin and BFV Infantry

What is Really Important?

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Bradley fighting vehicle (BFV) infantry (the dismounts) have always been overtasked and under-resourced. Few BFV units have anywhere near their authorized dismount strength; most company commanders feel fortunate to be able to dismount more than 40 infantrymen. This problem is compounded by the BFV's many weapons. A platoon leader dismounting his infantry has four Dragons, two M60 machineguns, M249 light machineguns, and M203 grenade launchers, as well as rifles. Often each platoon has only a dozen or so dismounts to begin with.

The current concept of 9x2+5 (two squads of 9 men each plus a 5-man machinegun section) in a BFV dismounted infantry platoon is, in practice, unachievable. Most BFV platoon leaders would be thankful for two nine-man squads, a radiotelephone operator (RTO), and a medic to dismount from their platoon's vehicles, much less two machinegun teams.

We have been working with the BFV for 15 years now, and the guys in the back are still overloaded and overtasked. If we are to be successful, we have to make some hard choices: Just what is it that we want Bradley dismounts to do?

We have to come to terms with the

fact that BFV dismounts are not like other infantry. Their area of focus needs to be much narrower and should be tied to their vehicles, except in unusual circumstances. Thus, viewing the BFV dismounts as a separate maneuver element is often a mistake. The two are inseparable and complementary.

The following is a suggested breakdown of tasks for the BFV infantry:

In the Offense:

- Breach obstacle.
- Assault.
- Clear a trenchline.
- Clear a building in military operations on urban terrain (MOUT).

- Provide local security for the BFV.

In the Defense:

- Defend obstacle.
- Provide local security for the BFV.
- Man observation post (OP), security patrols.
- Defend along dismounted (non-vehicle trafficable) avenues of approach.
- Defend in MOUT.

The weapons required for these tasks are always individual close-range weapons—AT4s, SAWs, M203s, M16s, and hand grenades. As a result, we must make a conscious effort to divest the BFV infantry of the bulky crew-served weapons that now burden it.

Dragons (and their Javelin replacements) should be eliminated from the BFV platoon. The two M60s should be retained within the platoon—on the chance that a defense on a dismounted avenue of approach will require M60s on tripods with traversing and elevating mechanism—but they should not habitually be used in the assault.

In the attack, the BFV infantry—freed of the heavier weapons—would be able to place more men in the actual assault while being supported by the direct fire of the BFVs and M1 tanks (as was originally intended). We have a much better chance of seeing two coherent squads—with a total of 14 to 18 men—and a platoon leader with his RTO on the ground, instead of a platoon (minus) mob of guys carrying heavy weapons that are ill-designed for close assault. If we have positioned the tanks and BFVs correctly, we shouldn't need M60s and Javelins in the assault. And quite frankly, the absence of these weapons will make ill-advised separate dismounted night attacks before the line of departure (so popular at the National Training Center a few years ago) significantly less palatable.

In the defense, the infantry secures obstacles, provides local security for the

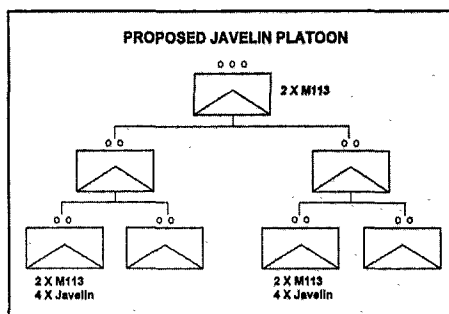
fighting vehicles, and can also provide defense on a dismounted avenue of approach. This last mission is one of the few in which BFV infantry should be employed away from their vehicles. Because of the limited number of dismounts available, their position along the dismounted avenue of approach must be chosen with some care. The requirement to reload the TOW system further limits the number of infantry in the defense (or in overwatch). This normally means a dismounted infantryman stays aboard the vehicle to facilitate TOW reloading and pass 25mm ammunition forward as required.

Any way you look at it, the Javelin is a neat piece of gear. It is more accurate than the Dragon, and it has twice the range. Unfortunately, the current philosophy of one-for-one replacement for the Dragon leads us right back to the overloaded BFV infantrymen.

The problem with equipping the BFV company with the Javelin is that it gives the infantry dismounts something else to carry. The BFV dismounts (even in the 9x2+5 configuration) clearly don't have the manpower to be lugging Javelin systems around (just as they really couldn't lug Dragons around). By equipping the BFV platoons with Javelins, the Army is virtually guaranteeing that everyone dismounting from a Bradley will be carrying either a Javelin, an M60 or M249 machinegun, an M203, or a radio. We're essentially back to square one in terms of having BFV infantry that is loaded lightly enough to perform its mission.

The first step we must take is to admit that we don't need as many Javelins in the BFV battalion as we had Dragons. Considering the massive amount of antiarmor firepower inherent in a BFV battalion task force, we can get by with significantly fewer of these systems. Eight Javelin systems would be enough to complement the capabilities of the M1s and BFVs.

We could reorganize the BFV infantry in several ways. Assuming 9x2+5 is still the goal of the Infantry School, we could have two platoons per company with a five-man machinegun section and one platoon with a five-man Javelin section. Although this would cut down



on the number of Javelin systems, it would still present the normally understrength BFV infantry with six crew-served weapons and too few people to man them. It would also limit at least one platoon's ability to conduct close assault. (Let's face it—the Javelin is a great system, but it's nothing you'd want to carry while doing individual movement techniques against an objective.)

Javelins do bring a unique man-portable, fire-and-forget punch to the battlefield. I would never propose that they be left out of the BFV battalion. What I do propose, however, is that they be taken out of the actual BFV companies and placed in a separate organization of their own.

Specifically, I propose the creation of a single antitank platoon—a Javelin platoon—in the heavy battalion's headquarters and headquarters company (HHC). This would keep the BFV infantry focused on its important tasks and also give the heavy task force commander a Javelin capability. The BFV battalion—with its other armor-killing systems—does not need as many Javelins as a light, airborne, or air assault battalion. The BFV battalion's Javelin platoon should consist of two sections of four systems each. It should have six M113-type vehicles—one for the platoon leader, one for the platoon sergeant, and four for the two sections—with a total of two Javelin systems carried on each. The Javelins would be fired from the dismounted position only; the M113s would be purely battlefield transportation.

In the defense, the Javelin platoon would be emplaced on terrain that is not suited for vehicle-mounted antitank systems such as BFVs and tanks—hillsides, ridges, the sides of ravines, or upper stories of buildings in a MOUT environment. With its M113

safely hidden, a Javelin squad would be free to prepare positions, allowing for maximum system survivability. Ideally, each system should have several alternate firing positions with prestocked ammunition. (These positions would have to be within running distance of each other.)

The Javelin is less than the ideal weapon for rapid displacement from one battle position to another, because a Javelin team must disassemble its systems to move to and remount its M113, and then dismount and move to its next firing position. The Javelin platoon would probably be best employed in the main engagement area of the battalion task force where less major repositioning is necessary.

A key consideration for the employment of the Javelin platoon is its rate of fire. Although the Javelin has twice the range of the Dragon—with a much higher hit/kill probability—it has a similar rate of fire. At three missiles in two minutes, the Javelin platoon in itself could not generate enough volume of fire to break a large armored formation in the same manner as could a tank or a Bradley platoon.

In offensive operations, the Javelin's role is to provide support-by-fire and overwatch. Its comparatively short range increases its vulnerability (especially in a daylight, open-terrain environment such as the National Training Center). But the ability of the Javelin teams to dismount and climb to vantage points that would not be available to typical vehicle-mounted systems would give the Bradley battalion task force a capability it otherwise does not have.

The distance from the vehicle to the firing position and the difficulty of the terrain involved—plus the number of missiles that have to be carried to provide overwatch or support-by-fire—may dictate that each Javelin squad carry only one of its two systems and the other squad members carry ammunition, radios, and the like.

The Javelin squads' infiltration on foot to a hidden support-by-fire position before line-of-departure time is one of the few instances in which a mechanized task force commander may want to conduct a separately timed movement

with his BFV dismounted infantry element. Even in this case, it would be a good idea to use the infantry from a follow-on team to allow the dismounted infantry to assist or protect the dismounted Javelin element in movement, and then move to a location where they can remount their BFVs and continue the attack. Key planning considerations in this are, once again, the number of Javelin systems and the number of rounds to be carried. At least four rounds per system would be needed for an effective overwatch or support-by-fire position.

In the attack, the Javelin platoon, at least initially, would be on the battalion task force net. In support of company teams in action on the objective, however, the overwatching Javelin element would have to be on the assaulting company team's net as well.

The Javelin platoon leader should be able to monitor two nets simultaneously, which would cause him to drop off the battalion net to provide responsive overwatch and receive fire directions from the assaulting unit. Arrangements within the Javelin platoon would have to be made for monitoring the battalion task force net, probably within the platoon sergeant's vehicle.

During stability and support opera-

tions in an environment with no armored threat, the Javelin platoon could be useful in several secondary roles. The availability of a platoon with six M113s and 30 soldiers would give the task force commander additional flexibility. The Javelin systems should either be left at home station or cached at a secure site in country, while the platoon deploys with small arms only. Ideally, each vehicle could be configured much like the old Vietnam era M113ACAV with one .50-caliber and two M60 machineguns on pintle mounts. This would give the platoon formidable machinegun firepower, and enough M16s and M203s should be made available for all crew members.

The following are some of the missions the Javelin antitank platoon can perform in a stability and support operation:

- TOC/trains security.
- Main supply route security.
- Convoy escort.
- Armored support platoon missions (resupply of elements under fire).

The BFV platoon started off overloaded, and we have been adding gadgets to it ever since. We keep trying to get this small platoon dismounted element to do way too much. It is time to fall back and regroup. By concentrating

on core tasks and divesting the platoon of unneeded (and unused) capabilities, we can improve the performance of the BFV infantry in those core tasks that are necessary to the success of the BFV battalion in combat.

Most of all, we must be realistic about the fielding of the Javelin system in the BFV battalion. Merely replacing the Dragon one-for-one will not work. Cutting down on the number of Javelins and reorganizing them within the BFV companies will alleviate—but won't entirely eliminate—the over-equipping problem of BFV infantry. Only by creating a separate Javelin platoon can we also make the most of this new system's capabilities. We must bite the bullet and form a dedicated Javelin unit within the battalion. The capabilities of the Javelin warrant this; it will nicely complement the BFV and the M1. By doing so, we can improve both the employment of the Javelin and the performance of the already overloaded BFV dismounts.

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